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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR 2005 INNOVATION IN THE USE OF
TECHNOLOGY AWARD - ERIC A. SALZMAN

1. Nominating Officers: Steve Valdez (FS01) Management Counselor, Steve Goertz (FS02) Supervisory General Services Officer; Doug Bruce (FS03) Assistant Regional Security Officer; Jennifer Schaming-Ronan (FS04) Consular Officer; Lindsey Diefenderfer (FS05) Consular Officer;

2. Mr. Salzman does not have any specific job responsibilities for the management, development, implementation, or support of computer technology. He has used his knowledge of web-based database programming, working at home on his own time, to develop several data management applications for Embassy Kingston, including an OpenNet site, a Work Visa Appointment Tracking System (WVATS), a Foil Accountability Tracking System Online (FATSO) and a Visa Fraud Criminal Casefile (VFCC).

3. Embassy Kingston physically occupies several buildings; the same is true for its data storage infrastructure. Prior to 2004, officers outside the Chancery could not access forms and files residing on the Chancery's servers. In September 2004, Mr. Salzman proposed to senior officers in the Management, GSO and IPC units the creation of an OpenNet site for Embassy Kingston. Therein, sections would each have a page to which files could be uploaded for general access using password-protected one-click upload/delete/edit tools that would allow designated in-section personnel to manage content without adding to the IPC unit's workload.

4. Features: Information pages for each section (including EEO and AFSA); an anonymous suggestion box; an interactive country map with links to archived news and information; a community bulletin board; a personnel directory with staff photos, important numbers, contact info, tools for each user to update their own profile, and listings by section, alphabetically, or keyword search; front-page spotlights on Mission-relevant news stories from the past two weeks and upcoming events within the next 30 days; an ICASS service-quality feedback survey; newsletter archives; a keyword search function for news and files; and site-wide point'n'click content control for administrators.

5. The implementation of this project has revolutionized information flow in the Embassy. Increasingly, staff members are relying on the easy access to the data on this site. All staff members save time no matter if they are looking for information or being asked to provide it. The Marine security detachment finds the photo-directory to be especially useful in familiarizing new staff. Due to the ease of use and scalable architecture, Post is confident that the site can be maintained after Mr. Salzman departs and continue to meet the needs of the mission.

6. Embassy Kingston's work visa program is a high volume operation, second in the world in numbers processed. Prior to WVATS, work visa records were kept in a complex Excel spreadsheet. Officers spent hours each week searching for petition records and updating activity records. Duplicate entries were common, and large gaps existed where previous officers had fallen behind in record keeping. The system was described by one officer as "unsustainable". With approval of the section chief, Mr. Salzman developed an alternative web-based record-keeping system - WVATS.

7. WVATS features: Provides a user-friendly interface with a FAQ and helpfile; stores all records in a database located on a secure server with regular backups; prevents duplicate petitions or invalid data from being entered; creates a logfile of all activity, for auditing purposes; search function retrieves records by petition name or ID number; enables cases to be flagged for Anti-Fraud Unit investigation; allows users to add extensive notes to petition entries; generates time-series charts (yearly, monthly, and daily) of scheduled interviews; allows users to set general interview parameters (holidays, start times, daily interview caps, etc.), allowing the autoscheduler to place applicants into the next available appointment slot.

8. The WVATS on-line appointment system has proven an enormously effective and user-friendly tool for work visa adjudicators. Due to the wealth of information in the system and the ease of access to that information, officers have been better able to determine the validity of petitioners, cutting down on the number of fraud checks that

need to be completed and ensuring that applicants can be scheduled for interviews more expeditiously. Officers also can use the system to determine which applicants are new and which are returning without having to refer to the original petition, thanks to the feature that allows descriptive notes to be written about each petitioner during data entry. This helps reduce confusion while on the line, allowing officers to provide better customer service and adjudicate cases more quickly even if the petition is unavailable to them at the time of interview. Thanks to the on-line appointment system, productivity has been enhanced while preserving the integrity of the H2B scheduling and interview processes.

9. While serving as the Accountable Consular Officer (ACO), Mr. Salzman got approval from the section chief to replace the error-prone and time-consuming logbook system for visa foil accountability with a web-based accountability system that could check for mathematical errors or logical inconsistencies throughout the data-entry process and immediately identify an error's source, allowing for speedy and accurate resolution of any discrepancies. Records include the identities of the printer, the ACO and the section chief, as well as notes on any unusual events for a given day, and can be quickly retrieved for auditing purposes. The FATS0 system has been in daily use by Post's immigrant visa section since May 2004, and is currently being evaluated by Orkand Systems for possible inclusion in future versions of their consular automation software. Officers prefer the FATS0 system, due to ease of use, ready access to records, and demonstrated accuracy of results, and recommend that FATS0 become an accountability SOP.

10. After the successful deployment of the consular data management programs (FATS0 and WVATS), the ARSO asked Mr. Salzman to design a web-based database interface for storing records of visa fraud cases. The resulting secure VFCC system allows authorized users to create new cases, enter updates, attach supplementary files, generate printable reports in the standard Diplomatic Security (DS) format with one click, and share this information with other authorized officers through the OpenNet. The system generated strong interest among DS agents and supervisors when demonstrated at a regional conference in 2005.

11. Mr. Salzman's dedication to these projects has been particularly impressive. Prior to implementation he carefully researched the requirements and possibilities of each application. He was immediately responsive to security concerns and suggested enhancements. His initiative should be recognized and rewarded and that is why Post is submitting him for the prestigious "Innovation in Use of Technology Award."